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ABSTRACT

To help raise the reading scores and attitudes of selected "at-risk" students from Thomas Jefferson, Springfield Gardens, and Franklin D. Roosevelt High Schools in New York City, a pilot study daily provided students with individual copies of the "New York Daily News" and integrated the use of the paper into regular instruction. Teachers were given curriculum assistance and training in the use of the newspaper in the classroom. Findings based on a pretest/posttest design indicated that students made statistically significant gains in both reading and writing. Springfield Gardens students demonstrated statistically significant mean reading gains--the largest gain in the program. These students made similar improvements in writing. Results indicated that students' overall attendance was higher after the project than before it. Analysis of interviews and questionnaires showed that teachers, coordinators, participating students, and parents responded favorably to the project. Based on these findings, it was recommended that schools (1) increase efforts to provide needs-based staff development, (2) continue to provide incentives to students, (3) encourage a collaborative effort with content area teachers to integrate reading into other subject areas, (4) continue to have trained reading personnel teach reading, (5) use Springfield Gardens as a model, and (6) evaluate the curriculum guide and program implementation continually. (JD)

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

October, 1986

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CS008646

EVALUATION SUMMARY

1985-86

The Daily News High School Reading Program was a pilot program sponsored by the New York Daily News and administered by the New York City Board of Education's Division of Curriculum and Instruction. The program was developed to help raise the reading scores of selected at-risk students by: providing students with individual copies of the Daily News every day of the school year; integrating the use of the paper into regular instruction; and providing participating teachers with curriculum assistance and training in the use of the newspaper in the classroom. The 1985-86 school year was the first year of program operation. The program was directed toward ninth grade students in three high schools: Thomas Jefferson High School, Springfield Gardens High School, and Franklin D. Roosevelt High School. The schools included PREP and special education classes in the project.

During the 1985-86 school year the program had several objectives. These objectives were:

-to increase reading achievement of participating students;

-to increase writing achievement of participating students; and

-to improve student attitudes toward reading

The New York City Board of Education's Office of Educational Assessment/ Instructional Support Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./I.S.E.U.) conducted both a qualitative and a quantitative evaluation of the program. Highlights of the major findings were as follows:

-Overall, Daily News program students showed statistically significant reading gains of 2.7 N.C.E.s from pre- to posttest.

-Springfield Gardens students showed statistically significant mean reading gains of 9.5 N.C.E.s. This was the largest gain in the program; it was also educationally meaningful. Thomas Jefferson High School students made a reading gain of 3.0 N.C.E.s from pre- to posttest. This gain was neither statistically significant nor educationally meaningful. Students at F.D.R. did not show any change from pre- to posttest in their reading scores.

-Overall, results showed that participating students made statistically significant gains in writing.

-Daily News program students in Springfield Gardens made statistically significant gains in writing from Fall, 1985 to Spring, 1986. These were the largest writing gains in the program. At Thomas Jefferson, participants showed small writing gains from pre- to posttest, which was not statistically significant. F.D.R. participants did not show any change in their writing from pre- to posttest.

-Overall attendance was slightly higher in 1985-86 than in 1984-85 for participating students. The largest gains were shown by F.D.R. students. Springfield Gardens participants did not show attendance changes. (They had a high attendance rate in 1984-85 of 89.7%). Thomas Jefferson did not provide attendance information.

Based on these findings, the following specific recommendations are made:

- Increase efforts to provide needs-based staff development for teachers; particular attention should be given to the teaching of reading and writing at the high school level and the use of the curriculum guide.
- Continue to provide incentives to students.
- Encourage a collaborative effort with content area teachers to integrate reading and newspapers into other school subject areas.
- Continue efforts to have trained reading personnel teach reading.
- Springfield Gardens should be used as a model for replication.
- Continue to evaluate program implementation and the use of the curriculum guide so that methods, processes, and materials are described in detail for future replication efforts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Introduction	1
	Program Background	1
	Population Served	1
	Program Objectives	2
	Program Evaluation	2
	Scope of the Report	3
II.	Program Components	4
	Program Staffing and Administration	4
	Curriculum	4
	Staff Development	4
	Daily News Input	5
	Program Description	5
III.	Findings	7
	Methodology	7
	Reactions and Perceptions	9
	Results in Reading	10
	Results in Writing	12
	Attendance	12
	Attitude Change	15
IV.	Conclusions and Recommendations	16
	Conclusions	16
	Recommendations	17

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Comparison of Reading Scores of Daily News Project Participants by School	11
2	Comparison of Writing Scores of Daily News Project Participating Students	13
3	Comparison of Attendance Rates of Daily News Project Participants by School	14

I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Daily News Reading Program was a pilot project sponsored by the New York Daily News. The goal of this project was to improve the reading scores of selected at-risk students by providing them with individual copies of the Daily News every day of the school year and integrating the use of the paper into regular instruction. Participating teachers received curriculum assistance and training in the use of the newspaper in the classroom. The curriculum to be used was to be developed in the schools with staff of the Daily News and the New York City Board of Education's Division of Curriculum and Instruction (C. and I.). Teachers received training and staff development in the use of this curriculum.

An overview of the year's activities included: development of theme-oriented instructional units concerning the newspaper's sections, production of classroom publications, maintenance of writing folders for all participants, development of ongoing projects such as newspaper scrapbooks and collages, visits to the Daily News, and attendance at school workshops conducted by Daily News staff members.

POPULATION SERVED

This program was directed toward ninth grade students in three high schools: Thomas Jefferson High School, Springfield Gardens High School, and Franklin D. Roosevelt High School. The schools included PREP and Special Education students in the project.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

During 1985-86, the program objectives were:

-to increase reading achievement of participating students

-to increase writing achievement of participating students; and

-to improve students' attitudes toward reading

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The purpose of the 1985-86 evaluation by the Office of Educational Assessment/Instructional Support Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./I.S.E.U.) was to document the level and quality of program implementation, and to assess the program's impact on student achievement in reading and writing, and attitudes toward reading.

This evaluation focused on the program's activities, student achievement, and attendance, and employed the following methods:

- Interviews with the program coordinator, three English department chairpersons, and five English teachers. These interviews focused on descriptions of: program activities; project goals and staff's perceptions of the achievement of these goals; the program operating in each school; the assistance offered to teachers and administrators; curriculum development efforts; teachers' activities; the program's strengths and weaknesses; and recommendations for future implementation.

- A questionnaire given to a random sample of students who participated in the program. The questionnaire focused on: students' perceptions about the program; students' motivation and attitudes towards reading and school; and carry-over to other curriculum areas.

- Interviews with a random sample of parents in each of two schools.

- Observations of classes.

- Analyses of student scores on standardized reading tests and holistically scored writing samples.

- Comparison of student attendance figures for 1984-85 with 1985-86.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the 1985-86 Daily News Program. Project components and implementation are discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III presents staff and students' reactions to and perceptions of the programs; and findings for analyses of reading, writing, and attendance. Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM COMPONENTS

PROGRAM STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

The Daily News Program was administered by the Division of Curriculum and Instruction (C. and I.). The role of C. and I. was to design a program to facilitate the improvement of reading skills through the use of the newspaper as a primary text for the teaching of reading and writing to students performing below grade level. C. and I. provided curriculum assistance and staff training as well. The role of the Daily News was to provide enrichment activities for the students. The C. and I. program coordinator provided staff development on both a formal and informal level. The teaching staff included five English teachers, one English chairperson, and two special education teachers.

CURRICULUM

In 1985-86, the teachers and coordinator developed a curriculum outline. An anticipated outcome of this project was the formulation of a curriculum for the use of the newspaper in the classroom. According to project staff, this curriculum was being formulated in May, 1986 and will be in use during the 1986-87 school year.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The C. and I. project coordinator provided technical assistance to teachers and supervisors. Staff development activities included: intervisitations of staff from one participating school to another participating school; workshops in schools; distribution of reference materials; individual conferences with chairpersons; and collection of and discussions about lesson plans using the newspaper.

DAILY NEWS INPUT

The Daily News provided newspapers to selected students in each of the three New York City High Schools. The News staff hosted a "kick-off" party for the participating students and their families to which Board of Education personnel were invited. Throughout the school year, the Daily News staff provided incentives for participating students. These included calendars, t-shirts, and coupons for free products. Field trips to the Daily News plant and offices also took place. Arrangements were made by the Daily News to have selected production and writing staff meet with students at the school. At these sessions, students met with photographers, sports writers, and cartoonists and were informed of the inner workings of a newspaper.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program at Springfield Gardens served 140 PREP students. Two teachers, one a licensed reading specialist and the other an English teacher, taught a total of eight classes. These two teachers developed lessons together. Most lessons were initiated by a feature or article from the Daily News. The teachers developed a file of resources from the newspaper to be utilized throughout the semester. At this site, the paper was also used in other subject area classes.

At F.D.R., the program was implemented with 142 PREP and eight Special Education students. The English chairperson and an English teacher taught seven classes. The lessons dealt mainly with information regarding features and parts of the newspaper.

The total number of participants in the program at Thomas Jefferson was unavailable. The teaching program and administration staff changed often during the school year. One special education teacher taught throughout the year. One English teacher was involved with the program for one semester, while another teacher began in November and taught throughout the year. The Assistant Principal for English was removed at mid year and was not replaced until June, 1986. None of the teachers at this site had prior teaching experience.

III. FINDINGS

METHODOLOGY

To determine staff's reactions to and perceptions about the program, five teachers and three chairpersons were interviewed regarding staff development and support received from the Central Board and the Daily News staff; teachers' background and expertise in the teaching of reading instruction; utilization of the newspaper in the classroom; and program strengths and weaknesses.

To determine the impact of the Daily News Project on students' reading achievement, analyses of the students' reading test scores on the Gates MacGinite Reading Tests were conducted. These tests were to be administered by the participating schools at the beginning and end of the school year. One of the schools did not administer the Gates MacGinite. At this site, the results of the high school citywide reading tests were analyzed to assess student progress.

All reading scores were transformed to Normal Curve Equivalent (N.C.E.)* units. Comparisons of changes from pre- to post-test were made. To determine if the achievement differences were statistically significant, correlated t-tests were computed. Statistical significance can be affected by the size of the sample; i.e., even small differences

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*N.C.E. scores are similar to percentile ranks, but unlike percentile ranks, are based on an equal-interval scale. Normal curve equivalent scores are based on a scale ranging from 1 to 99 with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of approximately 21. Because N.C.E. scores are equally spaced apart, arithmetic and statistical calculations such as averaging are meaningful; in addition, comparisons of N.C.E.scores may be across different achievement tests.

for large samples may be statistically significant. Furthermore, statistical significance does not address the issue of whether the achievement changes are important to the students' educational development. Thus, an effect size (E.S.)* indicating the educational meaningfulness of the mean gain or loss for each comparison was also calculated. An E.S. is not affected by the size of the sample and it better reflects the importance of the changes to the students' educational development.

To assess participants' improvement in writing skills, writing samples were collected in the fall, 1985 and the spring, 1986. These samples were holistically scored. Correlated t-tests were computed to determine if the gains were statistically significant. An E.S. indicating the educational meaningfulness of the mean gain or loss for each comparison was also calculated.

Attendance was used as an indicator of the impact of the project on students' motivation. Participants' attendance rates in 1985-86 were compared to their attendance rates in 1984-85. The statistical significance of the changes in attendance was determined by computing correlated t-tests. Effect sizes were also calculated to determine the educational meaningfulness of attendance changes. Analyses of variance

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*The effect size, developed by Jacob Cohen, is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. According to Cohen, 0.2 is a small E.S., 0.5 is a moderate E.S., and 0.8 is considered to be a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful, reflecting the importance of the gains to the students' educational development.

were computed among the schools' gains. These analyses helped to identify if the program had a more significant impact at any specific site.

REACTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

According to two teachers in Thomas Jefferson, the training and support provided were adequate. However, being new teachers with no prior specialized training in reading instruction, they thought more support was necessary. Teachers at Springfield Gardens believed that since they had reading instruction expertise, the staff development activities were good, but not necessarily informative for them. Teachers at F.D.R. indicated that the staff development provided by the C. and I. coordinator was adequate.

The two participating teachers in Springfield Gardens High School had extensive prior training in teaching reading. One of these teachers had a reading license. One teacher at Springfield Gardens indicated that this project helped make this the "Single most exciting professional year I can remember in a long time." All teachers and chairpersons found the C. and I. coordinator to be knowledgeable, helpful, and readily available.

From interviews with participating chairpersons and teachers in all three schools, it appears that the attitudes of participating teachers mirrored their expertise. The school in which both teachers had experience in teaching reading launched a well-organized, sequentially developed, comprehensive program. These teachers worked together on planning and strategies. They met frequently and shared ideas and perceptions.

perceptions. They indicated that the newspaper was on an appropriate reading level for their students. Teachers in the remaining two schools believed the newspaper was too difficult for their students.

Three of the participating teachers (50 percent) indicated that they wanted to use the Daily News in their classes next year. Two indicated that they would like to use it with more able readers. The remaining two teachers (each having participated only one term) said they didn't care whether they were involved with the program or not in the second program year.

Participating teachers and chairpersons indicated that the program might have been more successful had a curriculum guide been available prior to program implementation. Additionally, the need for more staff development training activities was cited. Some teachers indicated that the program might have been more beneficially implemented with other, more able, students.

RESULTS IN READING

The comparison of pretest and posttest scores for participating students is presented in Table 1. Overall, Daily News Program students showed statistically significant mean reading gains of 2.7 N.C.E.s (S.D. = 11.2) from pre- to post-test. The comparisons by school show that:

- Springfield Gardens students made statistically significant gains of 9.5 N.C.E.s. This was the largest gain in the program. It was also educationally meaningful.
- Thomas Jefferson H.S. students made a gain of 3.0 N.C.E.s from pre- to posttest. This gain was neither statistically significant nor educationally meaningful.
- Students at F.D.R. did not show change from pre- to post-test in their reading scores.

TABLE 1

Comparison of Reading Scores of
Daily News Project Participants by School

High School	N	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Mean[a] Diff.	Effect Size S.D.	Effect Size
Springfield Gardens	34	18.6	10.6	28.1	8.7	9.5[b]	7.7	1.2
T. Jefferson	39	33.2	7.8	36.3	8.9	3.0	9.5	0.3
F.D.R.	79	29.8	12.2	29.5	10.9	-0.3	5.1	0.1
Total	152	28.2	12.0	30.9	10.4	2.7[b]	11.2	0.2

[a]An analysis of variance testing mean differences among schools showed an $F(1,150) = 38.57$ which was significant at $p < .001$.

[b]These differences were significant at $p < .01$.

- Posttest scores of students in Springfield Gardens High School were significantly higher than their pretest scores. The gain at this school was educationally meaningful.
- The overall mean difference in reading pre- and posttest scores was statistically significant.
- The reading achievement of Springfield Gardens students was significantly larger than the achievement of students at the other two sites.

RESULTS IN WRITING

The results of the comparisons of fall, 1985 to spring, 1986 writing achievement for Daily News Project students are presented in Table 2. Overall, results show that participating students made statistically significant gains in writing. The comparisons by school show that:

- Daily News Program students in Springfield Gardens High School made statistically significant gains in writing from fall, 1985 to spring, 1986. These gains were educationally meaningful.
- F.D.R. participants did not show change in their writing from pre- to post-test. This change was not educationally meaningful.
- At Thomas Jefferson, students showed a small gain from pre- to post-test. This gain represented a small effect size.
- Students at Springfield Gardens made significantly higher gains in writing than participants at the other two sites.

ATTENDANCE

Teachers indicated that students' attitudes and motivation towards reading and writing improved through the use of the newspaper in the classroom. Attendance, usually poor for at-risk populations, was used as an index of motivation for participating students. Analyses of the changes in attendance rates for participating students between 1984-85 and 1985-86 are reported in Table 3. Overall, Daily News program students' attendance rate increased by 1.4 percent. The comparisons by school show that Springfield Gardens and F.D.R. students did not evidence significant changes in attendance. Attendance figures for students in Thomas Jefferson were unavailable, even after several attempts by O.E.A. to get this information.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Writing Scores of
Daily News Project Participatings Students

High School	N	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Mean[a] Diff.	Effect Size S.D.	Effect Size
Springfield Gardens	20	2.0	.6	2.6	1.0	0.60[b]	0.8	0.8
T. Jefferson	25	2.3	.9	2.7	.9	0.40	1.1	0.4
F.D.R.	50	1.9	.7	2.0	.8	0.04	0.9	0.0
Total	95	2.1	.8	2.3	1.0	0.25[b]	0.9	0.3

[a]An analysis of variance testing three mean differences among schools showed an $F(1,93) = 3.5$ which was significant at $p < .07$.

[b]These differences were significant at $p < .01$.

- The overall mean difference in writing pre- and posttest scores was statistically significant.

- Writing posttest scores of students in Springfield Gardens High School were significantly higher than their pretest scores. The gains in writing for Springfield Gardens students were educationally meaningful and significantly larger than the writing achievement at the other two sites.

TABLE 3

Comparison of Attendance Rates[a] of
Daily News Project Participant by School

	N	1984-85 Mean	1984-85 S.D.	1985-86 Mean	1985-86 S.D.	Mean Diff.	S.D.	Effect Size
Springfield Gardens	35	89.7	6.6	89.4	9.4	-0.3	6.3	0.1
F.D.R.	35	82.4	13.2	85.5	10.7	3.2	11.3	0.3
Total	70	86.1	11.0	87.5	10.2	1.4	9.3	0.2

[a]Attendance figures for students in Thomas Jefferson High School were unavailable.

- Overall, the attendance rate of participants was 1.4 percent higher in 1985-86 than in 1984-85.
- F.D.R. participants increased their attendance rate by 3.2 percent.

ATTITUDE CHANGE

A total of 50 students in two schools were interviewed or responded to a questionnaire. This questionnaire gathered information about the impact of the program on students' attitudes toward reading and school. Almost all (96 percent) indicated that they liked the Daily News class best of all their classes; still more (98 percent) expressed the desire to participate again next year. In response to questions about attitudes toward school, 84 percent said they liked school more this year than in previous years. A more positive feeling about reading was indicated by 92 percent of the students while 40 percent expressed a more favorable attitude toward writing.

When asked what they liked best about the Daily News program, students generally stated that they found the newspaper to be interesting. Statements such as, "It is nice, it teaches things you never knew;" "It's interesting and it makes me understand what I read better;" or "It is good because people read more and understand the newspaper," were typical. In response to questions regarding the time spent now on reading a newspaper as compared to last year, 76 percent indicated that they read both the newspaper and other materials more. Nearly all (98 percent) said they took the paper home and their parents read it. Informal discussions with parents confirmed the students' perceptions.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The overall aim of the Daily News High School Reading Program was to help raise the reading scores of selected at-risk students by providing them with individual copies of the Daily News every day of the school year and integrating the use of the paper into regular instruction. The program was directed toward ninth grade students in three high schools: Thomas Jefferson High School, Springfield Gardens High School and Franklin D. Roosevelt High School. The schools included PREP and special education classes in the project.

Reactions and perceptions of teachers, coordinators, participating students, and parents were generally favorable. Teachers in the three participating schools were positive about the staff development workshops. The majority of teachers stated that the individual assistance they had received from project staff sufficiently prepared them for the project. Teachers were generally enthusiastic about the use of the newspaper in the classroom. In addition, participating students' expressed a favorable response to the program; their attitudes toward school and reading improved.

In identifying the variables that made the program succeed better at one site, results indicate that teachers' background and experience in reading and writing methodologies, their expectations that "kids can learn," and the role of the supervisor interacted with the use of the Daily News in determining its impact on the achievement and attitudes of target at-risk participants. The program worked worked best for students

in the classes of teachers with extensive experience teaching reading. Conversely, students in those classes in which the participating teachers had little or no reading instruction expertise and had lower expectations towards their students' achievement performed at a lower rate.

Major findings based on analyses of program data were as follows:

- When scores were compared program-wide, Daily News program students showed statistically significant reading gains of 2.7 N.C.E.s from pre- to post-test.

- Springfield Gardens students made statistically significant reading gains of 9.5 N.C.E.s. This was the largest gain in the program. it was also eduationally meaningful. Thomas Jefferson High School students made reading gains of 3.0 N.C.E.s from pre- to post-test. This gain was neither statistically significant nor educationally meaningful. Students at F.D.R. did not show any change from pre- to post-test in their reading scores.

- Overall results showed that participating students made statistically significant gains in writing.

- Daily News program students in Springfield Gardens made statistically significant gains in writing from Fall, 1985 to Spring, 1986. At Thomas Jefferson, participants showed small writing gains from pre- to post-test, which was not statistically significant. F.D.R. participants did not show any change in their writing from pre- to post-test.

- Overall attendance was slightly higher in 1985-86 than in 1984-85 for participating students. The largest gains were shown by F.D.R. students. Springfield Gardens participants did not show attendance changes. (They had a high attendance rate in 1984-85 of 89.7%). Thomas Jefferson did not provide attendance information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Increase efforts to provide needs-based staff development for teachers; particular attention should be given to the teaching of reading and writing at the high school level and the use of the curriculum.

- Continue to provide incentives to students.

- Encourage a collaborative effort with content area teachers to integrate reading and newspapers into other school subject areas.

- Continue efforts to have trained reading personnel teach reading.

- Replication efforts should follow the program as implemented at Springfield Gardens.

- Continue to evaluate program implementation and the use of the curriculum guide so that methods, processes and materials are described in detail for future replication efforts.